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**EASTHAMPTON IS ONE OF FOUR COMMUNITIES  
TO RECEIVE URBAN RIVER VISIONS GRANT**

The City of Easthampton will receive a \$200,000 grant from the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) for implementation of its Urban River Visions project. Easthampton will use the grant, along with \$56,000 in matching funds, for Phase I construction of the Lower Mill Pond Park.

The Lower Mill Pond Park, which was conceived and designed through earlier Urban River Visions projects, will be key to the revitalization of the Pleasant Street area and serves as a gateway into downtown. While this area is currently home to a mill pond, the new Manhan Rail Trail and several historic mill buildings, the lot where the future Park will be constructed is now an under-utilized, mostly paved section overrun with invasive plants that block access to the pond and views of Mt. Tom.

EOEA's grant will be used to construct the first phase of the park. The remaining pavement will be removed and a new lawn and pathways, new basketball courts, and a tot play area will be added. Picnic tables, a pavilion, and benches will also be constructed. In addition, a blighted building at the park's entrance will be removed.

"Urban River Visions fits into our smart growth philosophy, because it takes advantage of infrastructure that already exists in urban and downtown areas," said EOEA Secretary Stephen R. Pritchard. "By providing these grants, we're able to help these communities protect their environmental assets and promote smart economic development."

EOEA launched the Urban River Visions Initiative in 2002 by convening a collaborative planning process with the aim of developing a vision and action plan for urban riverfronts in

seven cities and towns in Massachusetts. The communities that were chosen achieved a mix of size and geographic locations: Athol, Chicopee, Easthampton, Fall River, Hudson, Lawrence, and Worcester. Under this initiative, people in each of the municipalities created a unique plan based on their community's needs, including housing, natural resource conservation, recreation, and commercial development. This round of funding is for the implementation of the recommendations from these municipalities' plans.

Highlights of the Easthampton's project include:

- Removal of pervious surface along Lower Mill Pond with resulting water quality benefits
- Removal of invasive vegetation and trash along the Pond.
- Re-vegetation with appropriate species.
- Restoration of urban greenspace.
- Creation of new active and passive recreation opportunities including: picnicking, walking trails, basketball, and a skate park. The improved water access will facilitate canoeing, kayaking, and fishing.
- Links to the Manhan Rail Trail, another recreational and alternative transportation resource.
- Adjacent to re-used brownfields (mill buildings). This reuse provides concentrated mixed-use development, conserves building materials, and may limit demand for development in outlying areas. The park will encourage additional redevelopment.

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